

## **Sister Clare Dawson, the returned missionary who's discovered the key to happiness!**

If you had asked fifteen-year-old Clare Dawson what she wanted to be when she grew up, she would have said something like 'a hotel manager.' However, God had a very different plan for her. A plan that has spanned over five decades, supporting and championing marginalised women overseas, most recently in Peru.

Today Sr Clare Dawson speaks with World Missions Ireland from her room in Tallaght, Co Dublin. Indeed, it was only a year ago when she made the decision to leave Peru, after twenty-one years, and return home. This was not an easy choice, but as she says, for everything there is a time, 'a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance;' *Ecclesiastes 3:4*

So how did this chatty, energetic, philosophical woman, originally from Kilrush Co Clare, become a Sisters of the Cross and Passion missionary? Her answer is beautiful in its simplicity - for her, it was the 'key to happiness.' At a young age, Clare was certain of one thing, she wanted to be happy. She felt that if she could 'click into God's will', it would happen. And this is what lead her to religious life - a pursuit of happiness, which she's found in serving others.

Throughout Clare's missionary life



**Sr Clare, with Julia and Amelia, with crafts they make and sell to support their families**

she has been greatly influenced by the teachings of Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian philosopher, theologian, and Dominican priest. Gutiérrez is regarded as one of the founders of Liberation Theology, which is built on social concern for the poor and political liberation for oppressed peoples.

With this in mind, she brings us back to her time in Peru. Here Clare lived and worked alongside the proud Peruvian people in Villa El Salvador. Many refer to Villa El Salvador as a shanty town, but not Sr Clare. She defiantly refers to it as 'pueblo joven', or 'young town'. Only forty years ago, Villa El Salvador, which lies on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, was pure desert. Today it has grown to become a bustling, engaged city of over 500,000...

Dear Friend,  
I am happy to introduce myself, Fr Michael O'Sullivan M.Afr., as the new National Director of World Missions Ireland!

It was a privilege to be chosen for the role after returning to Ireland following more than twenty-five years of my own missionary service in Africa and the Middle East. In such uncertain times, I am energised to play my part in such a vital purpose - helping others to understand and respond to their baptismal calls to mission!

I am truly honoured to represent World Missions Ireland, an organisation that is driven to promote and support the life-giving work of our overseas missionaries. I myself am a member of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), and similar to Sr Clare Dawson, I am originally from Kilrush in County Clare. I come to World Missions Ireland with a wealth of experience, having carried out missionary roles in Algeria, Sudan, Jerusalem and the UAE. More recently I was the local coordinator for Pope Francis' historic visit to Abu Dhabi in 2019.

It is wonderfully reassuring to know, that even today, Ireland continues to stay true to its proud missionary legacy by supporting our struggling brothers and sisters overseas. With this in mind, I extend a very special thanks to you! World Missions Ireland can only continue to serve those in need, in some of the most impoverished, inaccessible areas of the world because of your ongoing prayers and support. You make so much possible!

You are allowing the Church to thrive overseas by helping local communities to build schools, clinics, parish halls, churches and chapels. You are preparing the future leaders, teachers and carers of our Church by supporting the training of sisters, priests, religious brothers and catechists. You are protecting and caring for vulnerable girls and boys overseas by supporting programmes that offer them safe shelter, healthcare, education and hope for the future!

I also wish to thank our incredible overseas missionaries, Irish bishops, lay volunteers, local priests and sisters. I deeply appreciate your tireless work and ongoing support of mission. I look forward to working better together as we continue to inform, educate and energise people in Ireland on the life-giving work of overseas mission and missionaries.

To everyone, thank you for your continued support during these challenging and unprecedented times. Together so much is possible. Together we are helping the Church to grow and flourish - together we are mission!



*Michael P O'Sullivan*  
Father Michael P O'Sullivan

# Our Mission Teams Need - YOU

Do you want to meet like-minded people, who are passionate about mission and making a difference?

If so, you will be interested in learning more about World Missions Ireland's Mission Teams. Our Mission Teams meet regularly (currently via Zoom) in your diocese to plan events that support and promote mission awareness.

People in Mission Teams come from all walks of life - returned volunteers, missionaries, parishioners, teachers, pastoral workers, sisters, priests, charity workers...perhaps you've been

on mission, or you want to share the joy of your faith? Or maybe you're simply looking for a way to meet similar people.



If this sounds good, Jim Farrell, our Diocesan Mission Animator, would love to tell you more:

**[jim@wmi.ie](mailto:jim@wmi.ie) or phone 087 186 8682**

## **PAULINE JARICOT** 1799 - 1862

We are happy to announce that Pope Francis has begun paving the way for the beatification of Pauline Jaricot, founder of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Propagation of the Faith is one of the four Societies of World Missions Ireland, and its ethos is simple - to pray when you can and give what you can towards our brothers and sisters who have less.

Pauline was a person of extraordinary social vision. Born into a wealthy family in 1799, rather than a life of privilege, she committed herself to raising funds and awareness of world mission. As a child,

she appealed to people to contribute one penny a week to support abandoned children in China. She spent her entire life serving the poor and sick, visiting the needy, and offering shelter to street children.

Pauline embodies mission. A normal woman who became a pioneer of her time. Her legacy lives on through the Propagation of the Faith. Today her selfless acts continue to inspire and positively change lives for the better.

Thank you for all you did Pauline Jaricot. May you intercede for all those working in the Lord's mission!



## **MISSIONARY UPDATE: Fr Eddie Rogan, Villa El Salvador, Peru**

COVID-19 is sweeping through the fragile communities of Villa El Salvador, where Sr Clare Dawson was based only last year. In May, as infections surpassed 100,000, Fr Eddie Rogan contacted World Missions Ireland. Turn to page 4 to read his first-hand account of how life in Villa El Salvador has been upturned in the face of this terrifying virus.

“I was only beginning my life as a missionary in Villa El Salvador, when the pandemic struck. I arrived in Lima, Peru in January. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was recorded on 6th March, and as the days go by, the daily figures make for grim reading.



**For the poor, this pandemic is but one more crisis to add to the others they face**

The impact of the virus on Lima's poorest surpasses the government's ability to control it. People have been profoundly impacted. They have had to face the challenge of the pandemic on multiple fronts that have exposed their own vulnerabilities. There is now a widespread sense of grief and anxiety, a sense that this is a time never seen before. For the very poor, this pandemic is but one more crisis to add to the other daily crises they face.

Although people cannot go to church to practice, the faith of Peruvians is very strong. In these uncertain times, many draw strength from it. It seems people are falling back on such traditional devotions as the rosary. They say it helps them greatly. As one missionary friend of mine said, 'when it comes to faith, the people here, especially the poor, are way ahead of us missionaries. So often

they have had only God to rely on.'

However, many have lost their livelihoods, unable to buy food or pay rent. People are now more afraid of dying of hunger than of dying from the virus. Some who are without food have started putting white flags in front of their homes to show they need help. One Peruvian woman voiced the opinion of many, when she said, 'it doesn't seem fair...we've sacrificed so much.'



**Brave volunteers from Church organisations preparing food parcels for those most in need**

Thankfully, the closing of churches does not mean that Christ is not present - Christ is very present and active through the actions of many people! As a missionary, I bring God to my prayers, for all the people in our communities and throughout the world who are suffering, and ask Him to speedily remove this plague."

**To protect fragile faith communities, like those in Villa El Salvador, Pope Francis announced the COVID-19 Emergency Fund. To donate call Fiona on 01 497 2035 or go to [www.wmi.ie/covid-fund](http://www.wmi.ie/covid-fund)**



complete with a university.

However, in the 90's, when Clare first arrived some of the poorest people in Lima called it home. Most days were a struggle for many women in Villa El Salvador. Living below the poverty line and domestic violence brought much hardship. Often in an attempt to provide for their children, women would leave their young families to work in the homes of the wealthy. Too often they were exploited, badly treated and poorly paid, with little to no human rights.



Clare pauses for a moment and then quotes Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'If there is no friendship with them (the poor) and no sharing of the life of the poor, then there is no authentic commitment to liberation, because love exists only among equals.' These powerful words guide Clare in her life. She looks beyond colour and social class, and embraces the endless possibilities you give a person when you share the tools they need to become a self-sufficient, dignified individual.

So that's what Clare and the other Sisters of the Cross and Passion did - and

in fact still do in Villa El Salvador. For decades they have provided workshops where rural women have a safe space to learn new skills and create crafts. Selling the crafts internationally and at local markets gives them financial independence. These women now have the tools they need to take control and improve the quality of their lives.



**Thanks to the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, women in Villa el Salvador can make a living**

Guided by the beauty of her faith, Clare has helped thousands of marginalised women discover their strengths - something she is determined to continue. Up to a few months ago she was helping women in Tallaght, from a host of different backgrounds - Muslims, Somalis, Iranians - improve their English. The lock down may have blocked her determination, but only temporarily!

Please remember Clare's endless contributions in your prayers. And also, the four missionary Sisters of the Cross and Passion who remain in Villa El Salvador, carrying out life-giving work and sharing the Good News! Sr Clare Dawson, thank you for all you do. We wish you every success and joy in your next missionary chapter.

# ONE MISSION | FOUR STORIES | *AND YOU* ❤️

World Missions Ireland is part of a global network, serving the Church in over 120 countries. Internationally we are known as Missio or the Pontifical Mission Societies, and together we are Pope Francis' official charity for

overseas mission. We highlight the vital work of overseas missionaries and fundraise so that they can build and maintain a vibrant Church in over 1,100 mission dioceses, mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

## Caring for Our Church Family



## Enabling Brighter Futures



## Nurturing the Missionary Spirit

Last year because of your generous spirit we achieved so much. Together we provided funding for nine churches and chapels in Benin, Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire. This means that because of you, impoverished communities now have safe spaces to gather, so that they can celebrate and

## Training the Future

share the beauty and joy of their faith for generations to come. Together we are helping missionaries reach the unreachable, and share the protection that comes from knowing Jesus. Without the support of people like you, this simply couldn't happen!

**To make a gift, call Fiona on 01 497 2035 or [www.wmi.ie/donate](http://www.wmi.ie/donate)**

World Missions Ireland, 64 Lower Rathmines Rd, Do6 N2H1



[info@wmi.ie](mailto:info@wmi.ie)



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